

Message Text

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ORIGIN PM-04

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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APPROVED BY PM - GS VEST

L/PM - MR. MICHEL (INFORMED)

H - MR. DOBBS

OASD/ISA/NESA - CDR SICK

EUR/NE - MR. SHUMATE

NEA/RA - MR. SEMAKIS

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R 310209Z JAN 76

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 024231

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: XO, US, UK

SUBJECT: PUBLICITY ON DIEGO GARCIA AGREEMENT

REF: A. LONDON 1375, B. STATE 20351

1. WE SHARE BRITISH DESIRE TO HANDLE PUBLIC RELATIONS ASPECTS OF DIEGO GARCIA AGREEMENT IN LOWEST POSSIBLE KEY. HOWEVER, FAILURE TO MAKE ANNOUNCEMENT AT TIME OF SIGNATURE WOULD CAUSE US SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES WITH CONGRESS AND WOULD RESULT IN RENEWED CONGRESSIONAL ATTACK ON ADMINISTRATION HANDLING OF DIEGO ISSUE. A NUMBER OF CONGRESSMEN HAVE CLOSELY FOLLOWED DIEGO GARCIA DEVELOPMENTS AND HAVE MADE FREQUENT INQUIRIES ABOUT THE STATUS OF THE AGREEMENT. THEY WOULD BE INCENSED IF THEY DISCOVERED THAT AN AGREEMENT HAD BEEN SIGNED AND THEY HAD

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NOT BEEN INFORMED, EITHER DIRECTLY OR THROUGH AN ANNOUNCE-

MENT. OUR CRITICS IN CONGRESS COULD BE COUNTED ON TO RE-DOUBLE THEIR CHARGES THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WITHHOLDS INFORMATION RELATING TO DIEGO GARCIA, RENDERING OUR TASK OF BRIEFING KEY CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS ON PARA 3 OF AGREEMENT MUCH MORE DIFFICULT. WE COULD NOT SOLVE THE PROBLEM BY INFORMING CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS OF SIGNATURE WHILE WITHHOLDING INFORMATION FROM THE PRESS, SINCE WE HAVE NO CONVINCING RATIONALE FOR INFORMING SOME CONGRESSMEN AND NOT OTHERS, OR FOR INSISTING ON CONFIDENTIALITY.

2. REQUEST YOU ASK BRITISH TO RECONSIDER POSITION ON ANNOUNCEMENT AT TIME OF SIGNATURE, IN VIEW OF INEVITABLE DIFFICULTIES WITH CONGRESS IF NONE IS MADE. WE REMAIN CONVINCED THAT LOW KEY JOINT STATEMENT AT TIME OF AGREEMENT WOULD KEEP PUBLIC REACTION AT MINIMUM LEVEL. WITH THIS IN MIND, WE ARE DRAFTING WORDING OF ANNOUNCEMENT AND FOLLOW-UP PRESS GUIDANCE WHICH WE WILL SEND BY SEPARATE CABLE FOR DISCUSSION WITH BRITISH.

3. AT BRITISH REQUEST, WE WILL PLAN ON COORDINATING SUBMISSIONS TO CONGRESS AND PARLIAMENT. CASE ACT PROVIDES ENOUGH FLEXIBILITY FOR DELAY UP TO 6 TO 8 WEEK PERIOD FORESEEN BY BRITISH. AS NOTED IN REF B, WE COULD FIND OURSELVES UNDER PRESSURE FROM CONGRESS TO MAKE EARLY PRESENTATION UNDER CASE ACT. WE WOULD BE IN BEST POSITION TO RESIST THIS PRESSURE IF; A) DELAY WERE MINIMIZED, I.E. NO MORE THAN 4-6 WEEKS; AND B) WE COULD ADVISE CONGRESS THAT OUR DELAY RESULTS FROM BRITISH REQUEST TO COORDINATE WITH SUBMISSION TO PARLIAMENT. PLEASE ASK BRITISH TO ADVISE ON THESE POINTS.

4. OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH BRITISH EMBASSY (MILLINGTON) HAVE PARALLELED REFTELS AND THIS CABLE. KISSINGER

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